THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 60

A PARADE OF PRINCES
India's Rajahs and Maharajahs, Nizams and Nawabs

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 70c Canada 95c

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 60

Editor John Man
Deputy Editor Simon Rigge
Picture Editor Jean I. Tennant
Design Consultant Louis Klein
Staff Writers Susan Hillaby
Heather Wyatt
Christopher Farman
Picture Researchers Marian Berman
Pamela Marke"
Art Director Robert Hook
Assistant Art Director Graham Davis
Art Assistant Bridget Allan
Editorial Assistant Vanessa Kramer
Staff Photographer Eileen Tweedy
Partwork Director Kurt Medina
Sales Director George Gillespie
Consultants D.K. Fieldhouse, Lecturer in Commonwealth History and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
A.F. Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford

WILLIAM SEYMOUR, who wrote the main text of this issue, was an officer in the Scots Guards for 13 years and served in British India on the staff of the Governor of Bengal. Since independence, he has twice returned to India and written many articles on her past for *History Today*. His books include *Lands of Spice and Treasure* and a biography of his Tudor ancestors, Jane, Thomas and Edward Seymour.

Subscriptions – These are available at £6·50 for six months, inclusive of postage and packing. For addresses outside of the United Kingdom, the rate is £8·75, inclusive of surface postage and packing.
Back Numbers – These are available at your local newsagent or may be secured by post for the inclusive price of 25p per issue. Be sure and specify which issue(s) you desire.
Orders for both subscriptions and back numbers should be sent, with remittance, to *The British Empire*, BBC Publications, 35 Marylebone High St., London W1M 4AA.
Binders – These may be ordered at £1·05 for the Standard edition and £1·75 for the Deluxe edition, either individually or on subscription. Orders, with remittance, should be sent to *British Empire Binders*, BBC Publications, P.O. Box No. 126, London SE1 5JZ.
NOTE: All above payments should be by crossed cheque/P.O.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: (*t*=top; *b*=bottom; *l*=left; *r*=right). Cover: by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Inside back cover: The Parker Gallery, London. Camera Press Ltd 1672, 1675; J. Allan Cash Ltd 1659, 1668*bl*; by kind permission of the Department of the Environment 1656/7; Lord Elgin for Bruce Family Collection 1658, 1667; Fox Photos Ltd 1679; India Office Library and Records 1653–5, 1662/3, 1664*t*, 1670*t*, 1673/4, 1676; Keystone Press Agency Ltd 1668*tl*; National Army Museum 1664/5*bl*, 1666*t*; Paul Popper Ltd 1670/1; Radio Times Hulton Picture Library 1665*t*, 1677; Worcester Royal Porcelain Company Ltd 1680; by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum 1665*br*, 1671*t*. PHOTOGRAPHERS: Roloff Beny 1666*b*, 1669; Margaret Bourke-White 1678; Bryan and Shear Ltd 1658, 1667; Dmitri Kessel 1656/7; Roynon Raikes 1666*t*, 1676; Eileen Tweedy cover, 1653–5, 1662–4*t*, 1665*br*, 1670*t*, 1671*t*, 1673, inside back cover.

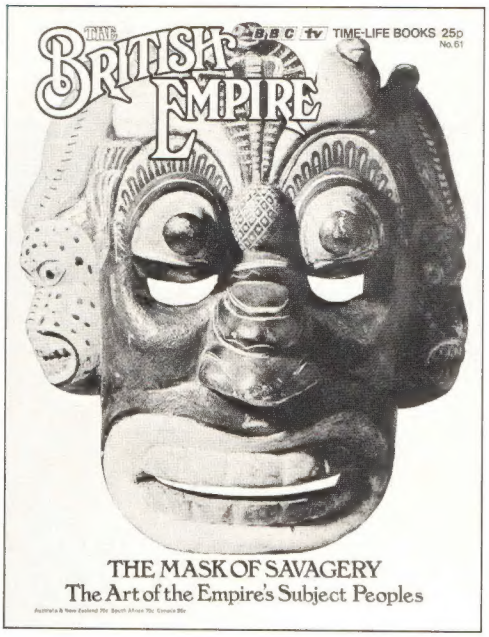
© 1973. Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V.

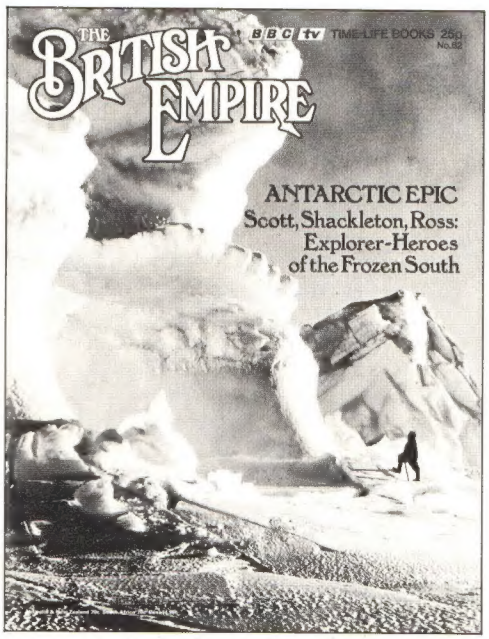
Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Published by Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V. in co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Distributed in the U.K. by Time-Life International Ltd. and BBC Publications.

Printed in England by Jarrold and Sons Ltd. Norwich.





CONTENTS

1653. A Parade of Princes
The princes of India, ranging from millionaires to demigods, are reviewed in a quick sketch that gives their history, assesses their significance and describes their astonishing magnificence.

1662. Picture Essay: Benighted Playboys Enlightened Despots,
Glimpses of the palaces, family life, ceremonies, bejewelled persons and vices and virtues of the princes.

1674. Medieval Monarchs in the 20th Century
The decline and fall of some of the last feudal autocrats to survive in the modern world.

Cover: The Rajah Ram Singh of Kotah rides in state procession under a golden parasol in about 1850, a scene that captures both the magnificence of the princes and the traditional deference of their subjects.

A list made by a British Viceroy records the tribes, populations, areas and revenues of all the great princes, together with their gun salutes.

The British never governed the whole of India directly. About one-third of the subcontinent and a quarter of its people were ruled by Hindu Rajahs and Maharajahs and Muslim Nizams and Nawabs. However, by the early 19th Century, these proud princes were all under the ultimate control of the fair-skinned foreigners, allowed to remain on their thrones only as long as their British overlords considered them satisfactory rulers. After 1858, their partnership with the Crown grew in strength and cordiality, and for nearly a century the ancient power of these medieval autocrats was upheld by the embrace of the modern British Empire. When that embrace was abruptly withdrawn in 1947, the princes fell from their thrones like a row of skittles.

by William Seymour

Back and forth across the brilliant tapestry of India's history, weave, like threads of gold, the stories of the Indian princes, long lines of rulers who for centuries held the destiny of India in their hands. Some ruled petty states a few miles across, some rivalled Emperors in the extent of their dominions; some were despots, revelling in luxury; some were men of vision and dedication; but almost all could dazzle friend and foe alike with their wealth and pageantry.

During the past 1,000 years or more, these proud and ancient clans have only twice been united under a single government: for 150 years when the great Mughal Emperors from Akbar to Aurungzeb sat upon the Peacock throne and for a little less than 100 years under the British Crown. The Mughals subdued the princely leaders by conquest and marriage; the British gained their support, through treaties.

The princes existed largely on British sufferance. In 1947, when once again the subcontinent became divided, this time into the modern states of India and Pakistan, the princes were shorn of their political power, and in 1970 the government of India deprived them of their remaining pensions and privileges. The princes had become an anachronism in the world of today.

We cannot be certain how it all began. The longest established of the Indian rulers were the Rajput princes, leaders of the 36 clans grouped in the north-west of India. These Rajputs traced their descent, some from the sun others from the moon and yet others from the fire lit by the gods. Certainly their pedigrees reach back in unbroken succession for several hundreds of years, and these children of the sun and moon have had their deeds recorded by bards from generation to generation.

In all this we are in the realms of legend; but it seems tolerably certain that the Rajputs are the true heirs of the *kshatriya* warrior caste of early India and can trace their descent from the Aryan, Scythian and White Hun stock that before Christ and in the early centuries of the Christian era exchanged the arid Gobi Desert of China and Mongolia for the well-watered, expansive Punjabi plain.

The Rajputs' inability to co-operate, not only in these early days, but throughout almost their entire history, left them wide open to conquest and defeat. Gradually they were driven back by the well-disciplined but savage Muslim hordes that in the 11th and 12th Centuries swept across northern India in iconoclastic fury; they retreated to the less easily accessible and more readily defensible territory in the north-west that came to be known as Rajasthan, or Rajputana. Here the great Rajput clans – Sisodias, Rathors, Kachhwahas, Chauhans – founded numerous principalities, including Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikanir, Kishangarh, Jaipur, Bundi, Kotah and Sirohi. The Sisodias alone of the Rajput clans never gave one of their princesses in marriage to the hated Muslim invader; their royal family ranks highest in dignity among all the Rajput princes and their ruler, who is the acknowledged head of the 36 royal clans, had the title of Maharana.

The Rajputs founded the largest number of principalities, but there were many other princely states in India. The Jats,

The Maharajah Ranjit Singh (below), Lion of the Punjab, was the last great prince to defy British authority. When he died in 1839, his 12-year-old son Dhuleep Singh, shown (left) chairing a durbar, was deposed by the British and sent to London where he became a favourite of Queen Victoria. Though outwardly he appeared to return her affection, privately he despised her.

One of Ranjit Singh's 75,000 soldiers sports some of his master's riches: a gold bracelet, a rich brocade uniform and a pearl halter for his horse.

cousins of the Rajputs, founded two states in Rajasthan, Bharatpur and Dholpur. Generals and proconsuls who broke away from the crumbling Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 became rulers of Muslim states such as Hyderabad. And at the beginning of the 19th Century the Marathas set up three large states in central India: Baroda, Gwalior and Indore.

The East India Company was largely responsible for the foundation of these three Maratha states. Early in the 18th Century four men had risen to prominence in the service of the Peshwas, as the hereditary leaders of the Maratha Confederacy were styled. They were the Gaekwar, Sindhia, Holkar and the Bhonsla Rajahs. As the Peshwas' armies controlled almost every part of India save for the extreme north and south and Bengal at that time, it was not difficult for these men, all of them bent on personal aggrandizement, to carve out considerable territories for themselves. By 1818 the British had at last subdued the marauding Marathas in a series of wars and were able to impose a final settlement on them. By it, the Peshwa and the Bhonsla Rajahs disappeared from the Indian political scene; but the Gaekwar, Sindhia and Holkar rulers managed to retain a fair slice of their conquests and became the rulers of Baroda, Gwalior, and Indore respectively.

The Company also restored Mysore to its original Hindu dynasty from which it had been usurped by that unscrupulous adventurer, Haidar Ali, in about 1761. The story of Haidar Ali and his equally courageous but less able son, Tipu Sultan, has already been told elsewhere in this history. Aided by the French, and for a time by the Marathas, they were a constant menace to the British for 30 years, until in 1799 Tipu perished among the ruins of his capital, Seringapatam, when the British successfully assaulted that city. The Company then returned the state to its original Hindu ruling family, who continued in office until 1947.

Early in the 19th Century, many of the princes were shrewd enough to recognize that the British meant to stay in India and that already they were the most powerful authority in the land. They therefore sought treaties of protection. In these early treaties, they contracted alliances based on protection of the state by the Company with the least possible interference in internal affairs, usually in return for undertakings to cease their raids upon neighbours and maintain troops to aid the Company if required.

The opening clause of the treaties was usually the same: "There shall be perpetual friendship, alliance and unity of interests between the Honourable East India Company and the Maharajah, his heirs and successors; and the friends and enemies of the one party shall be the friends and enemies of both." But other articles varied in accordance with the particular situation of the state with which the treaty was made. Lord Hastings, Governor-General from 1813 to 1823, negotiated a large numberof these treaties, and was careful to curb the freedom of the native states as much as possible. Eager to isolate the native princes, he prohibited any negotiations with other states without the Governor-General's consent, a measure that was to have unfortunate repercussions when the British were preparing to surrender power in the 20th Century.

By 1818 no state, except the Sikh kingdom, could claim to be independent. In the space of a quarter of a century a small trading company had been transformed into a major power throughout Bengal and southern India, and its agents were represented at every native court.

The Sikhs were brought into the British fold only 30 years later. The Sikh leader, Ranjit Singh, had, in accordance with a treaty made with the British in 1809, never attempted to extend his conquests south of the River Sutlej; but on his death in 1839 the kingdom passed to a two-year-old boy, Dhuleep Singh, who was merely a tool in the hands of an arrogant military junta. Before long these men crossed the river at the head of an army of invasion and there followed

the two Sikh Wars and the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

The relationship with the Company was not a happy one for the princes. The policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a state was deemed to be the right one so long as there was no scandalous misrule; when that occurred, the state concerned was simply annexed. Annexation was to the princes an ever-present and much-resented threat during the closing years of the Company's rule which ended in 1858. The British had a genuine desire to safeguard the welfare of people who were being misgoverned; but underlying this gentlemanly concern was the Company's need for land and all the rents and resources that went with it. For even when the policy of annexation had done its worst, the native states still covered two-fifths of the whole land area and included more than a quarter of the total population of the country.

The case of Coorg, a small state in the south of India, though extreme, perfectly illustrates the attitude of the British authorities to the native states. No sooner had a treaty been signed and the Rajah been assured of his autonomy in the early 19th Century, than he commenced to rule as a tyrant – and a mad one at that, for, as it now appeared, he was subject to fits of insanity. On his death, his brother behaved with even greater cruelty, and when his successor came to power and went one better by executing his victims with his own hands, the British government felt it was time to intervene. A diplomatic mission was dispatched and achieved nothing; a native emissary was put straight into prison by the Rajah; when further remonstrations brought only insulting letters from him, the British officially declared war. In 1839, the Rajah surrendered and his country was annexed.

The princely order did not resent annexations due to misgovernment nearly so much as the "doctrine of lapse," whereby if a ruler died without a legitimate heir his state lapsed to the Company. This policy was applied with disturbing rigour by Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General from 1848 to 1856, who in rapid succession annexed Mandvi, Kolaba, Jaloun, Surat, Satara, Jhansi, Jaitpur, Sambalpur, Udaipur, Baghat and Nagpur. (The policy was ended in 1860 by Lord Canning who offered absolute guarantees to the rulers that, in the absence of natural heirs, their rule should be perpetuated through the adoption of a successor according to Hindu – and Muslim – law.)

It might have been expected that the Mutiny, coming as it did when the "doctrine of lapse" was causing grave concern to many of the princes, would have found at any rate some of these rulers lacking in loyalty to their treaties. However, this was not so, and indeed many of them gave valuable assistance with troops and artillery from the forces that they had agreed to maintain.

But there were some who had nothing to lose and they leapt into the fray with a terrible ardour. Such a one was the Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the last Peshwa, whose appalling massacre of 211 women and children in Cawnpore has marked him with an abiding stigma.

Slightly more romantic was the story of Lakshmi Bai, the 20-year-old principal widow of the Rajah of Jhansi, whose state had recently been annexed. This lady, proclaimed ruler of the state by the mutinous sepoys, dressed in male clothing and put herself at the head of her troops. Although forced to withdraw from Jhansi into the neighbouring state of Gwalior, she took the almost impregnable fortress there – forcing the loyal Maharajah to take refuge in Agra – and was only defeated by the superior tactics of a British-led force. The Rani, still dressed as a warrior and fighting like one, was cut down by an English hussar.

In 1858 the East India Company followed the Mughal puppet Emperors into the shadows and the Crown assumed direct control of the government of India, with Lord Canning as the first of a long line of Viceroys. Queen Victoria in her proclamation of November 1, 1858, pledged herself to honour the terms and treaties that had been made with the East India Company.

The Crown took its responsibilities rather more seriously than the Company had done. Non-intervention, which had encouraged many rulers to govern as they pleased, became a thing of the past. Residents and Political Agents were appointed, and a part of their job was

Tokens of Princely Esteem

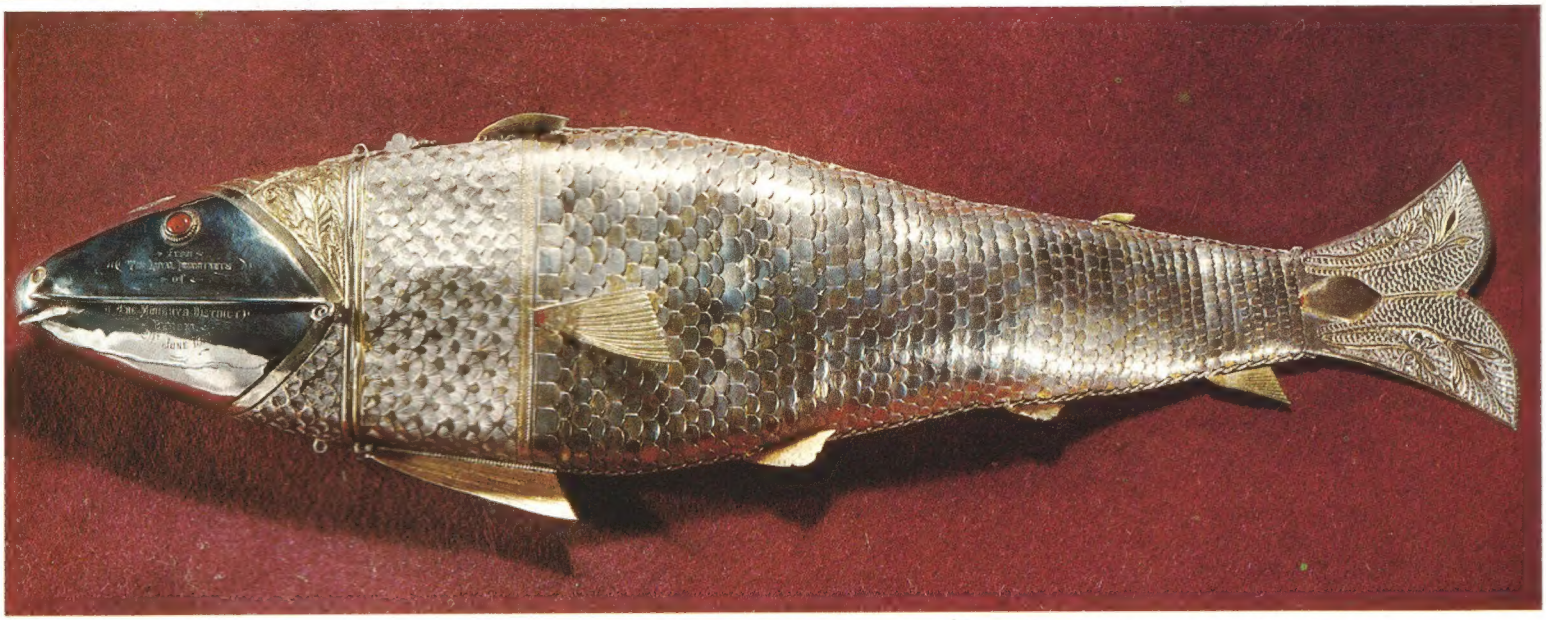
Along with every part of the Empire, the peoples of India demonstrated their loyalty to their Queen-Empress on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

The wealthy princes in particular outdid themselves in displays of bounty. They presented ceremonial addresses, enclosed in sumptuous caskets, to the Viceroy. He sent them on to Victoria, who added them to the royal bric-à-brac at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, where these examples were photographed.

In addition, the intensely loyal maharajahs celebrated their sovereign's anniversary by public ceremonies and good works. The Nizam of Hyderabad gave a parade and state banquet, fed the poor, released ten per cent of his prisoners and founded a new hospital ward for lepers. The Maharajah of Kashmir held a splendid sports day, laid the foundation-stone of a new hospital and reviewed his troops in his capacity as a British Major-General. The Maharajah of Patiala allowed free transport for everyone on the railways for one day, fed the poor of his state for three days, founded a public library and released aged prisoners.

In all these token acts, the princes were echoing the charitable ideals of Victorian Britain, on whose continued support their power and prestige depended.

A silver model temple was sent by Bombay.



From the state of Bengal came this exquisite address casket in the form of a laminated silver-gilt fish with eyes of polished gem stones.

Supported by two elephants, the magnificent address cylinder given by the Rao of Cutch stands upon a richly embroidered jubilee carpet.

close scrutiny of the internal management of the state. The larger states would have a Resident to themselves, but the smaller states shared one who would be assisted by Political Agents.

The Resident was always on hand to give advice on a wide range of personal problems, many of which might not fall strictly within the bounds of his jurisdiction, and he was often concerned with the pleasanter tasks connected with pageantry and ceremonial. But a Resident was fortunate indeed if he did not have one or more tangled problems to unravel during his tour of duty in a state. These could vary from a difficult succession dispute such as the request in 1925 of the Sultan Jehan Begum of Bhopal to make her youngest son heir to the throne instead of the son of her deceased eldest son – a request involving the intricacies of Islamic law – to the case of the ruler who complained to the Political Agent that he had been whipped by a European lady. On investigation it was found that the lady was one of many who had been lured to the palace through an advertisement in the Calcutta Press for a governess, and then found that she was expected to be a mistress instead: this particular girl, forewarned of possible danger, had taken the precaution of buying a whip and arranging a speedy getaway!

A curious duty, never officially terminated, which went back to the early days of British rule when the practice of suttee was forbidden in the early 19th Century, was for the Resident, on the occasion of a ruler's funeral, to stand guard outside the door of the women's apartments during the cremation ceremony. But the trickiest task of all was to scrutinize the internal management of the state when the administration was very backward or there were signs of gross inefficiency, extravagance or corruption, and then offer encouragement in the conduct of administration.

Lord Canning made it quite clear that the British insisted on good government, and would enforce dethronement, or even confiscation, in extreme cases of disloyalty, misrule or unseemly conduct. This remained the policy of the Crown thereafter. Indeed, the rulers of Baroda, Indore, Nabha and Alwar were all deposed for misrule between 1876 and 1933.

The case of Mulhar Rao Gaekwar of Baroda, deposed in 1876, was a peculiarly unsavoury one; this prince not only indulged in crippling taxation, corruption and summary confiscation of property, but was also wantonly cruel: those of his subjects who proved contumacious were liable to find their heads squashed under an elephant's foot. The British also regarded him as disloyal, because after investigation the government of India found a strong *prima facie* reason to believe that he had been involved in an attempt to poison the Resident, a Colonel Phayre. After the report of a Special Commission the government of India thought him guilty; the British government declined to assume him guilty of attempted poisoning, but nevertheless agreed to his deposition.

In 1903, Tukoji Rao Holkar of Indore, on being found responsible for murder within his state, was forced to abdicate, and his son, following all too closely in father's footsteps, lost his throne in 1926 because he was involved in a murder case in Bombay.

The Maharajah of Alwar, Sir Jai Singh, was another remarkable character. In some ways he was all that a prince should

The beautifully groomed music class at Her Highness the Maharani of Mysore's Girl's School poses for an official photograph in the 1890s. It is eloquent testimony to the pride that progressive Indian princes and their consorts felt for their up-to-date schools.

be: capable of extreme charm, hospitable and a clever and amusing conversationalist. He was also a brilliant polo player and excellent shot. However, he had serious defects that rendered him totally unfit to rule. He had a violent temper, and when in a rage – a fairly frequent event – he was uncontrollable to the point of being dangerous; he drank so heavily as to impair his mental faculties; he was a sexual pervert; and a sadist into the bargain, as many people in the state were ready to testify.

These were extreme cases, which in pre-Mutiny days would have ended in annexation; the complete reversal in 1858 of the policy of non-interference resulted in much better and closer relations between the princes and their suzerain, and in the understanding that there were obligations as well as benefits in the partnership.

From this time onwards the union of the states with the British power grew in strength. The princes were encouraged to educate their sons along European lines and, for this purpose, colleges were founded for the sons of native rulers. These colleges, although at first lacking the discipline and much of the character of the English public school, were a definite step towards the final defeat of obscurantism.

At the same time measures were adopted that were of benefit to both parties. Railways from British India were brought through some states, though one ruler refused because he could not bear the thought of passengers eating beef in his territory; joint irrigation schemes covering both British and Indian India were worked out; in times of famine the states received maximum assistance; and a common fiscal policy was developed.

Apart from foreign affairs, and being debarred the right to negotiate and combine with other states, the princes had complete freedom within their principalities to govern according to their own customs. They were empowered to raise their own taxes, make their own laws and enforce them in their own courts. Matters that were the concern of British India as well as the states, such as railways, maritime customs and posts and telegraphs, were reserved to the central government, although some of the big states had their own internal railway system and Hyderabad had its own currency and stamps.

The emergence from almost complete feudal autocracy to government through a legislative assembly with an elected majority was, of course, a gradual process; but in some states, such as Mysore, Cochin, Travancore, Kashmir and Baroda this had been achieved at an early date. Baroda in particular had been a most progressive state since about 1885, with properly equipped modern hospitals, compulsory education and a democratic form of government that was constructed from the level of the village upwards.

A new generation of children crowd the playground of a school built by the Maharajah of Jaipur, one of the many princely foundations that today form part of republican India's educational system.

This elephant omnibus was of more interest to the Maharajah of Rewar than railways or state welfare programmes for his people.

Travancore also had a long record of sound government with a legislative council dating from 1888, and in 1933 women were given equal voting rights with men. This early concession to women's rights was not, in fact, surprising, for Travancore was a matriarchy: succession went through the female line. If need be, a daughter was adopted to ensure a female succession. Furthermore, in Travancore, women have never worn the veil, for the Muslims – who were responsible for bringing purdah to India – had never conquered the principality.

In the larger and more progressive states, the rulers owed a great deal to the excellence of their prime ministers, or dewans, as they were called. Some of these were men of wide horizons and displayed the highest administrative talents. A few princes appointed British dewans: Sir Donald Field, for example, was extremely capable in ruling Jodhpur.

Their great wealth, the magnificence with which they surrounded themselves, and their undoubted love of *folie de grandeur* have caused the princes to be condemned by some as ostentatious, flamboyant and vain. A few of them were; but the lives of many of their most humble subjects, who regarded – indeed almost worshipped – them as prince, counsellor and friend, were considerably brightened by the colour and pageantry of the palace. The loyalty and devotion still adheres to the former ruler in most states.

The splendour of their lives, their lavish hospitality and great generosity has tended to obscure the fact that there were social obligations as well as opportunities for pleasure for the Indian princes. It is true that over the years there were those who abused the authority committed to them and led the lives of despots in India or playboys in Europe. But the great majority of the princes did not employ their vast revenues purely for pleasure. The upkeep of the state forces, police, schools, hospitals and numerous charitable institutions all made inroads into their wealth.

Nevertheless, there was usually sufficient in the privy purse to ensure that anyone fortunate enough to have been the guest of a prince during one of the big festivals, or at the time of his birthday, would have witnessed pageantry – often prolonged over many days – of a kind that has almost disappeared from the more hum-drum world of today.

Princely India had unrivalled opportunities to present pomp and ceremony in incomparable settings: great palaces, spacious *maidans* (open areas), fairy-tale forts and temples enshrining centuries of a proud people's life and faith. There were many seasonal festivities for the gods and goddesses and each was kept with suitable splendour. One of the great Hindu festivals is the Dasserah, which commemorates the classical war between Rama and Ravena. Naturally, the precise form of the parties associated with this, or any of the other festivals, and indeed some of the detail concerned with the ceremonies themselves, varied in each state; but the grandeur of the setting, the colour of the pageants and parades, and the magnificence of the prince, gorgeously bejewelled and surrounded by his equally resplendent nobles, was much the same throughout the whole of princely India

Jaipur, in particular, was a state that lent itself to these great spectacles, for not only is the city itself one of the most beautiful in India, but the City Palace and the great fort at Amber have over the ages become a solid symbol of a past that still endures.

When Dhula Rai led his Kachhwaha clansmen from Gwalior 800 years ago to found the state of Jaipur, he made Amber his capital and built into the hillside a fortress-palace entered through beautiful Mughal gardens. (These still survive to enchant the tourist as he rides his elephant through them to the palace.) In the 18th Century the great Jai Singh II moved his capital from Amber to the present Jaipur city, whose lovely pink stone, symmetry of lay-out and imposingly wide main streets are a memorial to his skill as an engineer and architect.

Although the religious ceremonies and parades actually connected with the Dasserah celebrations might occupy only two or three days, the parties would get under way some time before. By day every form of outdoor sport was available for the guests to watch or take part in: cricket, tennis, squash, shooting and, of course, polo – for this state and its neighbour, Jodhpur, had a long polo-playing tradition. The late Maharajah of Jaipur was, in his prime, one of the finest polo players in the world, and at one time he had in his stables upwards of 80 first-class polo ponies.

Every evening there would be at least one party, and these would follow much the same lines whether they were held in the mess of one of His Highness's regiments, where the officers would be in mess kit and civilian guests wore a white tie, or whether they were a more informal affair given by one of the Ministers in their ornate houses and beautifully laid out gardens. Drink, in almost lethal quantities, was pressed upon the guests throughout the evening, and after dinner – usually an elaborate meal of Indian and European dishes – there would be several tables of bridge. Later in the evening came the inevitable *nautch* (dancing) girls; these were often brought from all over India as the hosts tried to outdo each other in producing the most attractive and skilful performers. To many Europeans, however, their jingling evolutions had a cacophonous sameness.

As the day of the feast drew nearer, parties and games were overshadowed by religious ceremonies and parades. These were all immensely spectacular, although one – the great Balidan ceremony of thanksgiving through sacrifice – struck those ignorant of the Hindu religion as macabre. In one of the many courts of the palace at Amber, silhouetted against a star-filled sky and illuminated by flambeaux and floodlights, the strains of the state anthem and a booming 17-gun salute welcomed the Maharajah, his Ministers and nobles. They took their seats to watch the ceremonial killing of many goats and buffaloes. The swiftly decapitated heads of the sacrificial animals were laid before the temple door of one of the most feared goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, Kali, whose hideous apparition still confronts the visitor.

The Dasserah is a military festival portraying the victory of good over evil, and occasion is taken to bless the arms, equipment and animals of the fighting forces. It was therefore natural that the great day itself commenced with a military review. The Jaipur state forces comprised a regiment of horse and foot guards, one cavalry regiment and two infantry battalions of the line. They were, like most of the troops from princely India, as smart on the parade-ground as they were efficient on the battlefield. In the words of Lord Mountbatten: "Those of us who had the privilege of seeing the Jaipur guards trooping the colour will agree with me that it was worthy of the trooping the Colour of any of the regiments in His Majesty's Brigade of Guards."

In the afternoon a durbar was held in the lovely durbar hall of the City Palace. Durbars were a great feature of the Indian states, and, although they were held on many different occasions, the procedure for each varied only slightly in detail. They were one of the gayest and most colourful aspects of court life. The nobles and all the men of importance in the state would be present, their turbans, richly embroidered court clothes and the velvet scabbards of their ceremonial swords alight with diamonds and precious stones. They stood in groups round the one solitary silver-plated chair of the ruler, for usually none but the ruler was seated; everyone else either supported themselves on jewel-encrusted forked sticks or reclined on the floor.

As the prince, preceded by his staff entered the hall the band would strike up the state anthem and the guard of honour would lower the state Colour. If it was a *nazar* – or "token money" – durbar, the nobles, followed by subjects of lesser importance, would come forward in turn to offer token money to their prince, who touched it and laid it aside. All the time brightly attired dancing girls – without whom no occasion seemed complete – carried on a peculiarly Indian warbling from a corner of the room.

A durbar never lasted very long; soon the durbar hall began to empty, and it seemed as though one was watching a beautiful set of gaily enamelled statues in sedate priestly procession.

The crowded day ended with a long and colourful procession comprising almost everything that could move or be moved from gorgeously caparisoned elephants to creaking bullock-carts and ancient horse-drawn siege-pieces. The column made its way to a temple on the outskirts of the city for a short religious ceremony. The ruler, escorted by a troop of his Horse Guards with their standard, rode in the beautifully decorated state carriage, which brought up the rear of the procession. With the disappearance of the princely order, religious ceremonies like these, though still widely celebrated, have diminished considerably in splendour.

BENIGHTED PLAYBOYS ENLIGHTENED DESPOTS

There were still over 600 self-ruling princes of India in the mid 19th Century, even after the East India Company had annexed many of the princely states. As these pages show, they differed widely in custom, clan, character, life-style and age – some were only children. Although the Crown placed a restraining hand on their shoulders after 1858, they were still masters in their own houses and free to spend their fabulous wealth as they wished, right into the 20th Century. Some chose to develop their lands, educate their subjects and play the role of enlightened despot. Others preferred to play polo, shoot tigers and enjoy the life of playboys.

The Maharajah of the Punjab

The Maharajah of Benares

The Maharajah of Rewar

The Maharajah of Bikanir

The Maharajah of Jodhpur

The Nawab of Rampur

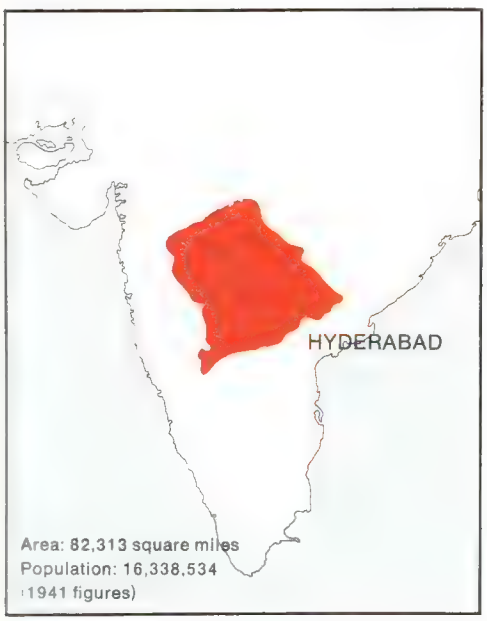
The Maharawal of Jaisulmer

Hyderabad: Riches Beyond Compare

Hyderabad was a vast, 82,000-square-mile superlative that dominated the middle of India. It was the largest, the most populous and, with its diamond- and gold-mines, the richest princely state in the subcontinent. It also enjoyed a special relationship of "ally" with the British Crown: while other princes went to meet the Viceroy at their borders, the Nizam advanced no farther than the door of his drawing-room.

The seventh Nizam, Osman Ali, who succeeded in 1911, was called the richest man in the world. Rats in his treasury once ate three million pounds' worth of banknotes: it had no noticeable effect on his wealth. In the First World War he contributed £20,000,000 to the British war effort and in the Second, additional gifts bought a squadron of Hurricanes. Later, apart from an abiding weakness for luxury cars, of which he had 200, he allowed the preservation of his personal fortune to become an obsession, spending only a few pence a day on himself: enough for a few betel nuts, opium and cheap local cigarettes. At his death, he was variously estimated to be worth between £160,000,000 and £600,000,000 – much of which came down to his descendants.

The natty sixth Nizam, seen here in 1890, used one of his two 180-carat diamonds as a paperweight.



The "Indian-Classical" palace at Hyderabad, seen here photographed during Lord Curzon's 1902 visit, still stands as a monument to strong British influence.

The magnificent chandeliers lighting the palace at Hyderabad were the passion of the sixth Nizam, who imported the best in the world.

The third Nizam (seated) gives a regal audience to his Ministers.

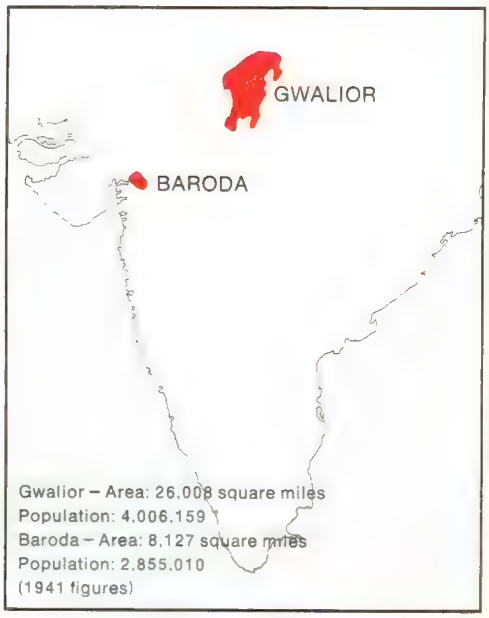
Gwalior: A 21-Gun Salute

The ninth Maharajah of Gwalior, Sir Madhav Rao Sindhia, was an archetypal "nice chap," proudly Western in outlook, a marvellous host and staunchly pro-British. In recognition of the money and troops that he sent the King-Emperor in the First World War, he was granted two extra guns to his 19-gun salute.

Eager for Western-style progress, he made Gwalior one of the most advanced states in India. He balanced the budget, encouraged local industries, built schools and hospitals and provided honest judges who sent their prisoners to model jails.

At leisure activities, he enjoyed driving steam-engines, crying out to his admiring people "No danger, Sindhia drives," and had a passion for tiger-shooting. He even wrote a book about it – *A Guide to Tiger Shooting* – which became prescribed reading for the British dignitaries at his hunting parties.

Sir Madhav Rao Sindhia was a study in geniality.



Standing outside the ornate palace at Gwalior is one of the cannon that fired the 21-gun salute – the largest accorded to any Indian prince.

Baroda: From Vice to Virtue

Khande Rao, Maharajah of Baroda from 1856 to 1870, devoted his life to buying diamonds, setting up gladiator fights and devising various unpleasant methods of torture. But the British did not interfere; nor did they when, after his death, his jail-bird brother, Mulhar Rao, put his Chief Minister behind bars and pickled him to death on a diet of salt water and pepper. But when Mulhar Rao was strongly suspected of attempting to murder the British Resident, the British could ignore his excesses no longer, and deposed him in 1876.

Since Mulhar Rao's heirs were excluded from power, a distant relative, a 12-year-old farmer's son named Saraji Rao, was placed on the throne. He was a complete contrast to his predecessors. Brought up by strict English tutors, he became a model ruler, removing the worst evils of the caste system and bringing in reforms

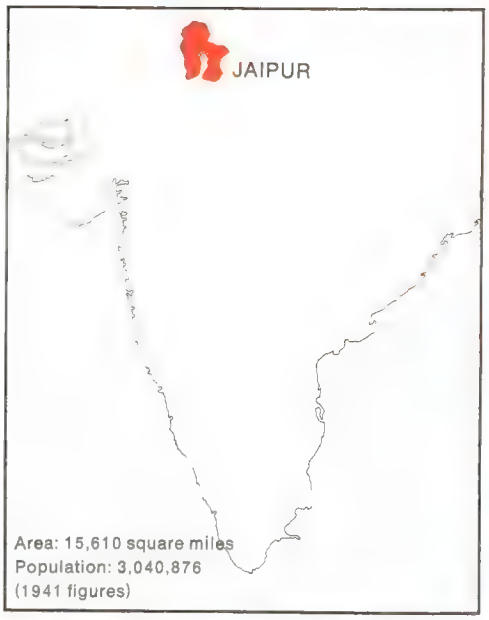
Saraji Rao's palace at Kazabad shows how his Victorian tutors had influenced his taste.

The great reformer, Saraji Rao, poses with his children.

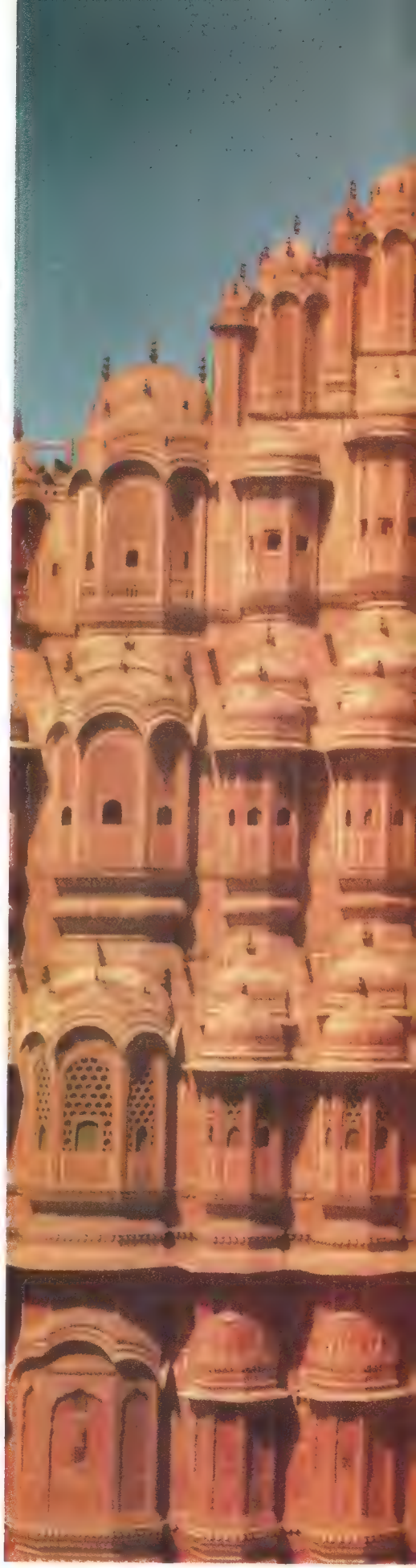
Jaipur: Palaces and Gardens

If beautiful cities were the measure of princely standing, then the Maharajahs of Jaipur would be pre-eminent among the princes of India. Their capital, Jaipur, built in the hills of the north by the great Maharajah Jai Singh in 1728, was a creation of the romantic imagination, with its geometry of wide boulevards, the grand square splashing with cool fountain water, the flower vendors' blazing marigolds. One-seventh of the city was taken up by gardens, courtyards and exotic palaces, rusty pink in colour, colonnaded with shady verandas and aired by finely latticed windows.

This elysian city was the seat of state government until 1947. The last autonomous Maharajah, Man Singh, died playing polo at Cirencester Park in the Cotswolds in 1970. But his ancestral home still stands as a reminder of past glories.



The Maharajah Man Singh's wedding was the traditionally sumptuous Hindu ceremony.



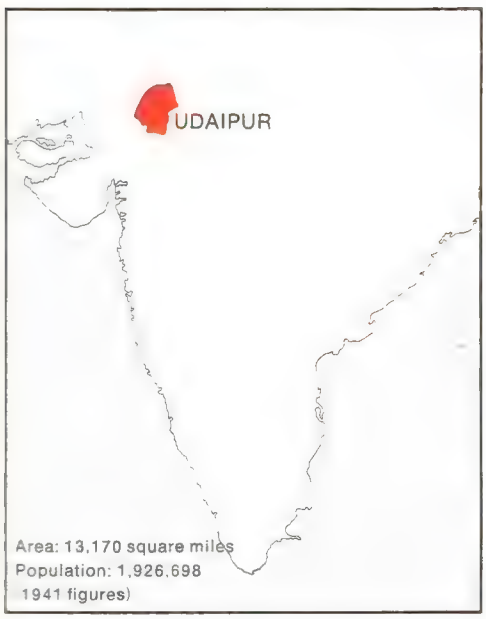
The exquisite Ram Bagh palace at Jaipur, once the royal residence of the Maharajahs, has now become a hotel for tourists.

The charmingly titled Palace of Winds was built by one of the Maharajahs of Jaipur at the end of the 18th Century. There his wives could sit in the heat of summer and feel the cool breezes wafting through the lattices as they gazed at life in the street.

Udaipur: The Greatest Pride in India

The rulers of Udaipur were acknowledged as heads of the Rajput hierarchy by the other princes and privileged with the special title of Maharana. They had been the first Rajput clan to set up a principality in India – in the 8th Century – and claimed descent from the sun. They were above all warriors, and to avoid dishonour of defeat they practised the terrible rite of *johur* – mass suicide. Three times when their ancient stronghold of Chitor was besieged, their women burned themselves alive in the dungeons and the men fought savagely on the bloody hillside until all were cut to pieces. The last *johur* was in 1567, when Chitor was stormed by the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Among the women who died in the fire pits were nine princesses, and 8,000 men were slaughtered. So it was that the Maharanas of Udaipur could proudly claim never to have given a princess in marriage to the Mughals nor to have bowed at their throne.

Even under British rule, the Maharana insisted on preserving "face": every time he was called to Delhi to pay homage to the Viceroy, he confined himself to his palace with a convenient fever.



The Maharana of Udaipur's peaceful summer palace in the middle of Lake Pichola, built in the 17th Century, is now a hotel whose attractions include piped music and a showplace bridal suite containing a velvet swing decorated with bells.

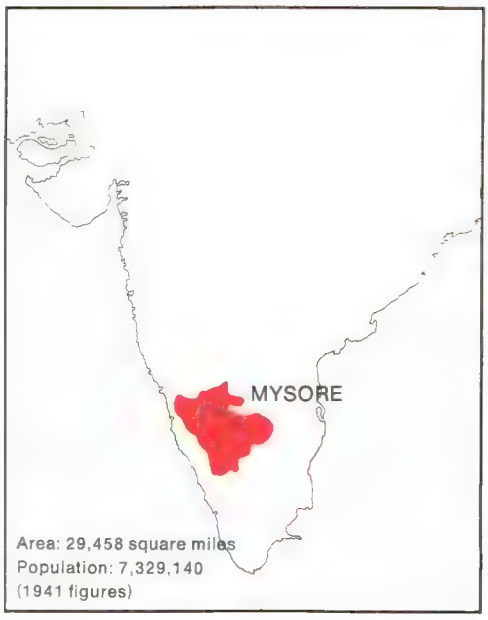
The curved sword worn by the Maharana of Udaipur symbolized the fierce pride of this Rajput clan of warriors.

The Maharana, shown setting out on a boar-hunting expedition in this painting of 1855, had no trouble finding his sport since the wild boar were accustomed to approach the palace to be fed by his servants.

Mysore: Prince of Earth and Heaven

Like most other princes, the Maharajahs of Mysore were generally intensely religious men. The climax of the year in Mysore came with the autumn equinox, at the ten-day Hindu festival of Dasserah. Although this festival was celebrated all over India, in Mysore it had a special importance. During it, the Maharajah was revered as a demigod. For nine days, he retired deep into his palace to worship the patron goddess of the festival, Chamundi, whose silver, ten-armed statue stands in a temple upon a sacred hill two miles outside the capital. During that time, no human hand could touch him, and gradually he took on the aura of divinity from Chamundi. On the tenth night, he travelled in solemn procession, to the sacred hill and there, before thousands of his people, he was purified by the priests of the temple in a final, glittering act of communion.

The purification ceremony was last performed in 1970. But a new calling had already been found. The Maharajah Khrisnarajah, who ruled from 1884 to 1940, applied himself with almost religious devotion to making Mysore a modern Western state with compulsory primary education, a free health service, industry and a university. Today, Mysore remains a showpiece.



The Maharajah (in the background) prepares to step into the state coach at the climax of the ten-day Dasserah festival.

Seated on the royal Lion's Seat, the present Maharajah of Mysore, Jaya Chamaraja, surveys the ancient rituals of the Dasserah festival through a pair of modern dark glasses.

The boy in the centre of this family group was to become the great Maharajah Khrisnarajah, the pious reformer who made Mysore a model state.

II. Medieval Monarchs in the 20th Century

The princes of India were positively Byzantine in the manner of their wealth. They possessed vast storehouses of beautiful treasures in their palaces, forts, armouries and vaults. No one country in modern times can have contained so many fabulous collections of precious stones, priceless carpets, superb porcelain, chunks of almost transparent green jade, necklaces of cascading pearls, dark red amber, rubies and emeralds – many the size of pigeons' eggs – and every variety of gold, silver and ivory objets d'art. Some of the jewels dated back to the early Mughals, who bestowed them upon court favourites. Generation by generation, the collections were added to and improved.

The wealthiest of all the princes was the Nizam of Hyderabad. He possessed one of the world's most splendid collections of silver and jade; and although it is doubtful if he, or anyone, ever knew just how much treasure littered the King Kothi and his other palaces, he was meticulous and well informed enough to add considerably to the fantastic fortune that his forebears had amassed.

The Gaekwar of Baroda must have been near the top of the league, possessing jewellery worth about £3,000,000; apart from the usual gleaming necklaces of sapphires and rubies, a string of exquisite pearls and a huge diamond aigrette, he possessed a sword said to have been worth more than £200,000 and a famous diamond collar consisting of 500 diamonds arranged in five rows, with two rows of emeralds. The pendant of this collar was "The Star of the South," a diamond of even finer texture than the Koh-i-noor. There was also in his palace a carpet, measuring ten feet by six, interwoven with strings of pearls, studded with diamonds at its centre and in the corners.

The treasures in the fort at Jodhpur, too, though they may not have rivalled the Nizam's and Gaekwar's millions, were a truly remarkable collection: swords with heavily bejewelled hilts and scabbards, hand-carved furniture inlaid with precious stones and plated with silver or gold, diamond solitaires, every kind of beautifully fashioned objet d'art, and a generous ration of pearls, emeralds and rubies. The Maharajah of Patiala, who until well into the 1930s had almost 3,000 servants, possessed among his jewellery the incomparable Sans Souci diamond, part of a collection bought from the Empress Eugénie of France for £300,000.

In Jaipur, there is a fort seemingly hewn out of the living rock of a hill that towers above Amber. It contains a fantastic horde of treasure: once in his lifetime the ruler could enter the fort and remove one object from the horde. The late Maharajah of Jaipur would occasionally show his guests one of the amazing objects once contained in the fort: a golden bird, not large but almost too heavy to lift, whose "feathers" were solid rubies. This was the one heirloom that his predecessor had removed.

Those states that possessed a private

At a durbar in Poona in 1790, a British envoy sits cross-legged on the floor as he hands a treaty to the Peshwa of the Marathas. Even high British dignitaries had to conform to the elaborate etiquette of these public audiences, which were the accepted place for the princes to do official business.

army could greatly embellish the pomp and ceremony connected with the various festivals. The Indian State Forces, which came into existence in the 1880s, were the natural outcome of the British-officered subsidiary forces kept since the days of the Company by certain states as a contribution to the common defence, and usually maintained by the state in return for some special service rendered by the British. In peace-time the State Forces were entirely at the disposal of the ruler but in time of war they served under British Commanders-in-Chief. At the beginning of the last war there were 47 states maintaining one or more regiments, and the total force was some 61,000 men.

Many of the princes were not content merely to act as parade-ground showpieces, and in spite of their constitutional duties insisted on taking an active part in the last war. Three were given regular commissions in the British Army: the Maharajah of Jaipur, who served in Palestine and Egypt with the Life Guards; the Maharajah of Dewas, who was in the Western Desert with 2/4 Mahratta Light Infantry; and the Maharao Rajah of Bundi, who fought as a tank commander in Burma with Probyn's Horse and was decorated with the Military Cross for gallantry in the Battle of Meiktila. In addition, the Maharajah of Jodhpur served as an honorary Air Commodore in the R.A.F. It was ironic that a few years later the British handed the princes, who had given so much towards victory, over to the Congress Party, which had done nothing but impede the war effort.

Sport, of course, played a large part in the life of almost every prince. Shooting in one form or another was the most widely practised, but polo and pigsticking did not lag far behind. Curiously, hunting was almost unknown – although a Nawab of Jaora hunted a pack of hounds with considerable expertise between the wars, this was unique among the princes – and with only one or two notable exceptions they did not own racehorses.

Some states are closely linked by name with a particular game or sport. Polo was for many years associated with the ruling families of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bhopal; Jodhpur was also noted for the excellence of its pigsticking, but many other states – particularly Patiala, Dewas and Baroda – also practised this sport to the highest standard. In Bikanir, at a lake by the desert palace of Gajner, quite staggering bags of imperial sandgrouse were obtained; the Maharajah of Bharatpur could offer his guests duck-shooting where the bag was counted in thousands; while in Kashmir on the enormous expanse of water known as the Hokra *jhil*, large quantities of geese and duck were shot regularly throughout the season.

Returning to India now, one is saddened by the diminution of game; so many of the former preserves are at the mercy of anyone with a gun. Black buck, especially, have suffered terribly. In central India and parts of Rajasthan herds of these graceful antelope used to roam the plains, and as a guest of the state one could go out in the evening and enjoy several hours' shooting, photographing or just watching these creatures. There were princes who kept cheetahs – imported from Africa – to hunt black buck; to watch the singling out of the buck, the unhooding and unleashing of the cheetah, its lightning streak after the quarry and clean, instantaneous kill was a thrilling experience.

But in most states pride of place was given to tiger-shooting, and large tracts of jungle were reserved for the prince and his friends. Until quite recently there was no shortage of these magnificent animals, and as most of the princes were expert shots some very large individual bags were recorded over the years. The late Maharajah of Rewar (whose son now breeds white tigers) is credited with more than 800 tigers to his own rifle.

Tiger were shot either over a "kill" or driven to the guns, usually by an army of intrepid and remarkably agile beaters. The exact method employed depended upon the type of terrain and the particular wish of the guest for whom the shoot was arranged; both methods were equally thrilling, although the former could involve long hours up a tree at night – when the jungle is at its most weird and

The Maharajah of Mysore, almost hidden inside the howdah of his gold-clad elephant, sets off on a procession during the ten-day Hindu festival of Dasserah.

wonderful – with no sign of a tiger.

Some of the most impressive tiger-shoots were those that the princes arranged for a visiting Viceroy, or a local Governor. Cooch Behar, a Hindu principality some 300 miles north of Calcutta, often offered such a spectacle. The country is flat, intersected with many rivers, and the natural vegetation is a long type of reedy grass with tamarix and bamboo; it is almost bereft of trees and this makes it eminently suitable for driving tiger with elephants. When the Governor of the near-by Presidency of Bengal was invited to shoot by the Maharajah, he and his entourage would probably be taken to an impressive camp in the area selected for the three or four days of the shoot. Large tents lavishly carpeted and furnished surrounded an open space on which every evening would blaze an enormous log fire.

Each day the party would be transported on a whole fleet of pad elephants (so called because they were "saddled" with large flat pads and not howdahs) to the actual site of the drive, where they would exchange their mounts for the more stately tuskers who carried the howdahs. However humble a prince's guest might be, immense trouble was always taken by the head *shikar* (hunting) officer to ensure that as far as possible a tiger would have killed and be lying up in the vicinity; but for the visit of an important proconsul lasting several days it was no easy matter to have a tiger or two on hand every day, even though each beat covered a wide area. Elephants dislike tigers, and when they wind one in a beat, up go their trunks and out comes a high-pitched squeal; as the 40 or so in the beat gradually close the gap between them and push the tiger towards the waiting guns the noise is distinctly unnerving.

The afternoons of these days would probably be spent in advancing across country in a long line of elephants, shooting small game, of which there was a wide variety in the state. On the way back to camp the Maharajah was apt to suggest a race on the pad elephants for his younger guests, which began with each competitor having to mount his animal while it was standing rather than kneeling. This could only be done with the willing co-operation of the elephant, for it entailed clutching the animal's ears and being given, not a "leg-up," but a "trunk-up." Elephants have a fine sense of humour and occasionally one would withdraw his trunk at the critical moment, leaving his would-be jockey dangling from the elephant's ears – to the uncontrolled enjoyment of the mahout.

Throughout princely India the *shikar* department had been for many years one of the most efficiently organized departments of the state; the *shikar* officers were in constant communication with the outlying villages and in a position to arrange a tiger-shoot suitable for the most distinguished guest, or the pursuit of lesser game with which the teeming Indian jungles used to abound, at remarkably short notice.

Equally exciting in some of the southern states, notably Mysore, were the great elephant *kheddas*, in which a herd of wild elephants was first tracked and then most skilfully driven – with the aid of tame elephants – into palisades, there to be roped and eventually tamed. When done on a large scale, this operation – a difficult, possibly dangerous and always spectacular one – took months to prepare.

A rather more barbaric form of entertainment that was sometimes offered to a prince's guest was an animal fight, relic of a fiercer age when grim combats between large animals of the jungle took place in special arenas. More endearing were moonlight picnics by the side of

A Maharajah self-consciously poses in the driving seat of his car with a crocodile trophy resting against the front wheel.

By such sports as tennis the once gross Maharajah of Kapurthala (second from left) kept his weight down. As a youth, his immense paunch had for years prevented his sexual initiation. This he finally accomplished with the aid of a ramp designed to aid the copulation of elephants.

some enchanting lake with the noise of frogs and crickets and the occasional splash of a crocodile. There was one such place not far from Jaipur where the Maharajah had a lovely country-house, and from where – after a little trouble had been taken by the *shikar* officer – it was sometimes possible to catch a glimpse of a tiger silhouetted against the silver lake.

The linchpin of every state was the palace. No matter if the government was conducted by a legislative assembly, or merely through a council of Ministers, everyone looked to the occupant of the palace for inspiration and guidance. The establishment of a princely court followed much the same pattern as that to be found in the Government Houses of British India: the prince would have his private secretary, his military secretary and probably about three A.D.C.s. Nearly every morning the ruler would be fully occupied seeing Ministers, granting interviews, hearing petitions and attending meetings; maybe he would join his visitors for lunch, but more often they would not see him until late in the day when work – and in the hot weather a short snooze – made way for the pleasures of the evening.

Visitors to the palace, or the very comfortable guest-houses that each state ran, could be sure of a constant round of enjoyment at any time of the year. There was a long tradition that the welfare of his guest was the chief's principal concern. One of the A.D.C.s would be specially detailed to ensure that the wants of every guest were catered for. Cars were available with or without chauffeurs (shortly before the war the Jaipur fleet numbered 200, and there were two aeroplanes that the Maharajah piloted himself); there were ponies for those who wished to ride, and guides to show off the many picturesque sights and architectural gems that almost every state possessed. So highly organized was everything that it was possible for a man to watch a game of polo, play a game of tennis and shoot a panther all in the course of one evening. Hospitality was freely offered by all of those living in the close-knit community of the capital; in every house there was always a smiling welcome, and no guest was ever allowed to feel a stranger.

In the years between the wars there were few who could imagine that this princely bubble of gaiety and wealth would ever burst; still fewer were those who could measure the consequences, and perhaps none who could foresee the days when the palaces that once housed the eminent, wealthy and powerful would echo to the chatter of the tourist throng.

Immediately after the First World War, there started that round of conferences, reforms, Cabinet missions and Acts of Parliament that defined the course of events in India from 1919 through the years of the Second World War until the final achievement of independence in 1947.

Inevitably, the Indian states were closely involved in all these deliberations and for a time it seemed they would have a permanent role to play in independent India. The Government of India Act of 1919 – more commonly known as the

Pro-British but disunited princes sit in session in the Chamber of Princes, set up in 1921.

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms – founded a Chamber of Princes, inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught in February, 1921. The Viceroy was to be the President of the Chamber and the 120 members (the 108 princes entitled to 11-gun salutes or over, and 12 others elected by the rulers of non-salute states) elected a Chancellor annually. The Chamber met once or twice a year and provided a forum for debate on matters of common concern to the princely order and was a platform from which grievances could be aired and recommendations forwarded for consideration by the imperial government.

It was a body that had a definite constitutional importance – in spite of the fact that the rulers of two of the largest states, Hyderabad and Mysore, refused to be associated with it. The Nizam of Hyderabad – who had been designated Faithful Ally of the British Government by George V for his loyalty during the war – considered that his state was in the special relationship of an ally of the British Crown and not in subordinate union with the government of India; he always dealt direct with the King-Emperor through the Political Department. And the Maharajah of Mysore, ruler of one of the most modern and progressive states in all India, felt that any decision the Chamber might come to would not be applicable to his state.

There were indirect benefits, too, from giving the princes this means of taking part collectively in the management of their affairs. The more far-sighted of them were not only quick to appreciate the new opportunities for discussion among themselves, but read the signs pointing to the need of adaptation to the new Indian order and for co-operation with the central government. Rulers such as the Maharajah of Bikanir and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar became associated with Indian affairs at the League of Nations and represented their country at various imperial conferences. This gradual political awakening made steady progress in the years following the inauguration of the Chamber of Princes, and by the time of the first Round Table Conference on imperial affairs in 1930 the princes had advanced so far in their policy of evolution as to come to the conference table prepared to join in an All-India Federation scheme, provided their rights and privileges were safeguarded.

The three sessions of the Round Table Conference eventually resulted in the Government of India Act of 1935, and in this Act was embodied the scheme for Federation. The Central Legislature was to consist of two houses, a lower house or Federal Assembly and an upper house or Council of State. The princes had the right to nominate one-third of the members of the lower house and two-fifths of the upper house, but accession should be voluntary and Federation should not come into being unless and until princes controlling half the princely seats in the Council of State and ruling half the subjects of Indian India should accede. Here then was a real chance for the princes to play an all-important part in the affairs of their country. Had they taken it, they would have become an integral part of the new India shortly to become a Dominion.

This failure on the part of the princes to respond to the idea of Federation, which in the first instance was their own, has been attributed to short-sightedness, petty jealousies, lack of responsible leadership and even to their desire for security under the British Crown being greater than their patriotism. No doubt some of these reasons played their part; but, on closer examination of all that Federation meant, the princes came to see that they were sailing on uncharted seas. Much of what was involved was entirely new to them and called for the surrender of many of their privileges. After years of isolation, there had not been time for them to acquire the habit of pooling ideas and resources; and, being convinced that their hereditary rule was dependent on British support, they were reluctant to enter any scheme that did not fully guarantee their constitutional position. Nationalist agitations only strengthened their anxiety about their future position under the proposed Federation.

Whatever the causes, this doubting, wavering and intransigence on the part of the princely order spelt disaster to themselves. India entered the Second World War without the new central organization that might have been in operation, and the Viceroy announced that the federal part of the Act would be suspended. In the speech at the beginning of 1948 Lord Mountbatten, who was at that time Governor-General of an independent India, had this to say about Federation: "I know that this federal plan of 1935 was popular neither with the states nor the political parties; but personally I cannot help feeling that it was a great misfortune that circumstances did not permit of that plan being put into operation before the outbreak of war in 1939. Had this been possible, a suitable political structure would have been in existence in India during the difficult

years of the war, and it is very possible that the events in the country in recent years might have proceeded on entirely different lines. I have no doubt that this will be the verdict of history."

During the final negotiations that preceded independence, it was made quite clear to the princes by a Cabinet mission in 1946 that paramountcy would cease and with it the treaties and assurances, and that those rights previously surrendered by the states to the paramount power would return to the states. Surprisingly, in a statement to the Press the then Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes welcomed this decision; it seems as though Their Highnesses were quite unable to see the writing on the wall. It is true that on the only occasion Lord Mountbatten addressed the Chamber he stressed that accession to the new central government, which he strongly advised, would mean accession only in matters of defence, communications and foreign affairs and without any financial liability: "I am not asking any state to make an intolerable sacrifice of either its internal autonomy or independence." But a government whose avowed intention was to exploit its newly won autonomy upon a basis of universal suffrage was not likely to tolerate for long a large proportion of its people being autocratically governed. And so it proved to be.

The princes drifted towards independence completely disunited: some supported the constituent assembly, while others attempted to form a federation of states in central India, and still others hoped for complete independence. But at the time of the hand-over in August, 1947, or very shortly afterwards, all the states had acceded with the three exceptions of Junagadh, Kashmir and Hyderabad. Junagadh was settled without undue trouble, the state being merged with India and the Nawab retiring to Pakistan. Incidentally, the Nawab of Junagadh had an eccentric passion for dogs; he had many and was devoted to them, in particular taking immense trouble over their breeding. But in his kennels mating was no ordinary affair. His dogs were married in state, with a band, processions, fireworks and a banquet, at which some unfortunate guests were given positions of honour next to the bride or bridegroom.

Kashmir had become a predominantly Muslim kingdom as far back as the beginning of the 14th Century, and remained under Muslim rulers until being conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1819. In 1846 it was assigned to Gulab Singh, the Hindu chief of Jammu, for services rendered to the British in the Sikh Wars.

This sale of a Muslim people to a Hindu ruler resulted in the Kashmir problem that is with us to this day. Even 25 years after partition the state continues in something of a limbo. After some initial fighting, due largely to the ruler delaying his decision to accede to India, Kashmir became *de facto* a part of India; a plebiscite promised by Jawaharlal Nehru has never taken place, and the state continues to

The new Maharajah of Patiala, a dapper man in contrast to his enormous Casanova of a father, travels in state to a tea-party in Simla in 1939.

be administered by the Indian government (in which the present Maharajah, Dr. Karan Singh, is a minister). Indians may not, however, own property there and many Kashmiris regard their state as nearly autonomous. It seems that until such time as the plebiscite is held this most beautiful part of the sub-continent, whose enchanting landscapes of hill, wood and valley enshrine centuries of Indian history, must remain one of the flash-points in the uneasy and occasionally violent relationship that exists between Pakistan and India.

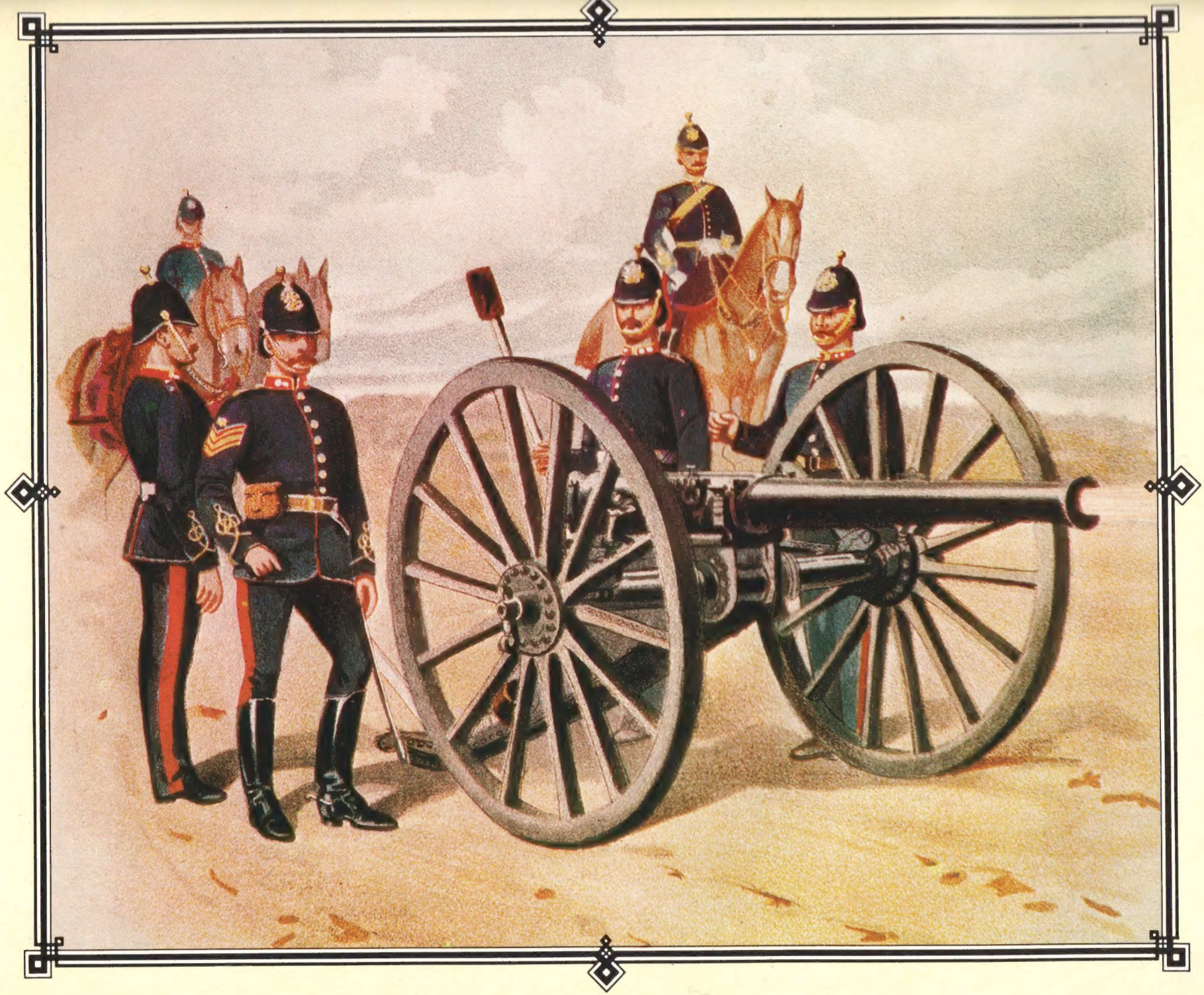
The sunset in Hyderabad was also slashed with storm-clouds. It was predictable that His Exalted Highness – this unique title, like that of Faithful Ally of the British Government, had been conferred upon the Nizam by King George V – would not be prepared to accept paramountcy from any future Indian government. Hyderabad was the richest, the most important and the most populous – 16 million – of all the princely states, and the ruler for all his eccentricity had achieved much in making it a thoroughly modern, financially sound and most progressive administration. He looked for special treatment in view of what he considered was his special position *vis-à-vis* the British Crown, and dreamt of independence with an outlet to the sea, for as a landlocked enclave in the middle of an independent India he realized that his state could not survive.

The Nizam was a remarkable man. Completely uninterested in outward appearance, he shuffled around in shabby clothes and carpet-slippers amidst enormous wealth, and worked all day in a dingy office. He was a devout Muslim and kept strictly to the law of only four wives; but being passionately fond of women and seeing no reason to dissemble his passion, he had, at the height of his power, a harem of some 200 concubines. A frail, but in many ways heroic figure, he was at the end staggering under a burden which he did not fully understand; for like all the princes he had lived a life remote from the vortex of power politics, and also like so many of them he seemed quite unaware that he was presiding over a doomed dynasty.

It was the Nizam's misfortune that in the last difficult months he was greatly influenced by a camarilla of Muslim Ministers; and in particular by the perfidious leader of an extreme religious sect, who was to ruin what slender chances the Nizam ever had of reaching a satisfactory compromise with the new Indian government. Clearly there could be no thought of independence for Hyderabad; but prolonged, and often turbulent, negotiations lasting for more than a year and ably conducted for the Nizam by the late Lord Monckton, were brought to nothing by the weakness and vacillation of the ruler and the understandable intransigence of the Indian Ministers. In September, 1948, the Indian army crossed the state border; within a few days the Nizam's army surrendered and Hyderabad ceased to exist as an independent state.

By January, 1950, the new Ministry of States in Delhi had completed a number of mergers and all the states in India had been geographically integrated, bearing the same constitutional relations with the central government as the provinces. The princes found themselves pensioners bereft of power and shorn of privilege. Their order, as a political institution, perished not because the individual rulers had failed in their duty, but because at the time of crisis they were disunited and proved incapable of adjustment to the changing conditions, and because the system for which they stood had become an anachronism. As V.P. Menon, Secretary to the Ministry of States, said: "The days of autocracy – benevolent or otherwise – are gone beyond recall"

This dinner-plate, one of a set made to order for a Maharajah by the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company, symbolizes the princes' close links with British high society.



Royal Artillery, 1890

Special offer to readers of 'The British Empire'

In commemoration of 'sixty glorious years'...

An exclusive limited edition of Dartington handmade glass goblets.

The latest 'British Empire' special offer is perhaps the most attractive so far. Not just a memento of the past, but a collector's item of the future: a pair of handmade goblets commemorating Queen Victoria's reign.

Each goblet bears a specially designed medallion, one depicting the young Queen as she was at her Accession in 1837, the other in her Diamond Jubilee year of 1897.

Individually numbered

Each pair of this limited edition is individually engraved on the base with its serial number. It is guaranteed that no more than 2,000 pairs of this commemorative edition will ever be issued. A special numbered certificate will be given with every pair.

Dartington handmade glass is internationally famous for the beauty of its design and the quality of its craftsmanship. The undoubted interest of these particular examples makes it virtually certain that the value of each numbered pair will increase over the years.

Only £6·25 a pair

We are able to offer the goblets at only £6·25 a pair (plus 25p postage) complete in an elegant presentation box.

The goblets have been designed by Frank Thrower, recent winner of a Duke of Edinburgh design award for Dartington glass. Approximately 6" in height, they are handmade by a master glassblower and his team at Dartington's Devon glassworks – exclusively for 'The British Empire'.

Just post the coupon below, together with your cheque or postal order. (No tokens are required.) Please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery. Money will be refunded if the goblets are returned undamaged within 10 days. Offer applicable to the British Isles only.

To: Dartington Goblets Offer, 17 Thame Park Road, Thame, Oxon.
Please send me.....pair(s) of Dartington goblets at £6·50 per pair (including postage). I enclose cheque or postal order for £..... made payable to Time-Life International.

Name.....
BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

Full postal address.....